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NZAPS-O Report of the National Australian Pharmacy Student Association (NAPSA) Congress, Perth, Australia, 2017

Over the 24th-30th of January this year, NZAPS-O delegates Lucy Mason, Laura Holland, Marc Rooney and Shalini Abeykoon, along with APSA (Auckland Pharmacy Student's Association) delegates Philip Cabasag and Surbhi Patel attended the annual National Australian Pharmacy Student Association (NAPSA) Congress in Perth. The congress involved 350 pharmacy students from across Australia and New Zealand, representing each of NAPSA's 18 branches and the two New Zealand associations. Over the week-long congress, students participated in educational seminars and workshops with topics such as the Roaming Pharmacist, opioid treatment and Chemo@Home, with the highlights of these outlined below. There were also various networking opportunities at the many social events, including a gala ball on the final night. The congress was an unforgettable experience that not only inspired us but also allowed us to make connections with our fellow pharmacy students in Auckland and Australia.

Roaming Pharmacist

The roaming pharmacist presentation was about two locum pharmacists who travel around Australia. They have teamed up with other likeminded people in an aim to 'combine creativity and adventure with healthcare and education'. They started their group so they could focus on issues that they are passionate about, such as mental illness, and educate their nation about these. They also explained how they have a lot more freedom in their lifestyle and could choose when to work and when to pursue hobbies. This showed a good work-life balance which I thought was very appealing. Although they chose to work in remote areas of the Australian outback, this could also be applied to New Zealand in a rural setting. Their thought process is that you can still do what you love while making a positive influence in the community with their jobs as a pharmacist. Before this talk, I did not know much about being a locum pharmacist, but they showed us how you don't have to do things the traditional way; you can bring some individuality into it.

Opioid Addiction and treatment

This presentation involved a documentary of real people with opioid addictions and how the methadone programme really saved their lives. They got into details about how and why they got into their drug habits that got them addicted and what life experiences they went through trying to support their use. They spoke of how rehab doesn't work well with opioid addiction which I also found interesting as that is often what many people think it is the right thing to do, especially those who oppose the methadone programme. By



watching the documentary my thoughts on the methadone programme were changed and I found that it was a more useful way to stop the cycle of opioid addiction. It allowed addicts to become functional members of society again with less of a risk of relapse when compared to attending rehab facilities. I also learnt about the prejudice the methadone programme members face when going to pharmacies to have their dose of methadone. This could be changed by pharmacists raising awareness of the effectiveness of the programme and how it is helping rather than hindering patient recovery. This is also applicable to New Zealand as we have a similar programme to Australia.

Community Pharmacy: A health destination

Swarup (Sam) Asfar was awarded the UTS Innovative Pharmacist of the Year (AUS) in 2015 and was part of the team that won the Guild Pharmacy of the year (AUS) in 2016. He had a presentation that was based around the idea of having pharmacies whose primary objective was to care for the patients. In his pharmacies, he made sure that every patient that walked through the door was seen by a pharmacist and not just a shop assistant etc. He does this because in Australia, there are many Discount pharmacies, which will give you the OTC products at a low price, but there will be no counselling, and no pharmacist interaction with the patient. He believed this was wrong and that the pharmacies were only worried about making money, rather than the welfare of the patient. He also talked about being unique. Make your pharmacy different from the rest, don't follow in the footsteps of someone else and do what you think is best for you and the customer. This has relevance to NZ as it makes you think of what sort of pharmacist you want to be. It makes you think about how you are going to run your pharmacy if you end up owning one. No doubt there will be discount pharmacies starting in NZ, so it's about whether you would want to be part of that or not.

Alzheimer's Australia

Another highlight was the Alzheimer's Australia presentation where patients with the disease came and spoke to us about their experiences. One patient discussed the benefits of having a good relationship with his pharmacist as they were his first port of call for any problems he was having with medication or just to discuss his health or life in general. It really highlighted to me the need for community pharmacists and how they can be relied on in many different situations. It showed me that they can do much more for the community than just fill prescriptions. I believe I can take this experience and implement it into working in community pharmacy in New Zealand. Due to the aging population, situations such as these will become far more common and I have learnt it is important to take the time to speak to them one on one to help improve their overall wellbeing.

Chemo@Home

The chemo@home presentation was an eye opener for many of us attending, particularly us kiwis who weren't aware of the programme. Chemo@home is a service operated by health professionals (including pharmacists) where instead of patients having to leave the comfort of their homes and come into hospital for their chemotherapy we can bring it to them. This allows the patients to be more relaxed and comfortable making the



fears and discomfort of chemotherapy less daunting. By having chemo at home, it also allows for less time to be spent away from home, as the patients would get their blood tests and then not have to wait in hospital for the results for them to then begin the chemotherapy. By staying in the patient's home, it builds good trusting relationships between the patients and health professionals. This is an important part of chemotherapy care as observation of how they are doing is crucial to the success of their treatment. Setting up a service like this in New Zealand would be feasible as we have less geographical barriers compared to Australia but still a high number of patients requiring chemo.

Social Highlights

NAPSA Congress gave us great opportunities to network with other students. Australia day was a break in the middle of the congress where we were given the day to go to the beach and spend time getting to know some of our fellow delegates in a more relaxed setting. We made many friends among the pharmacy students. I really enjoyed speaking to some students from Griffith University on the Gold Coast as we shared our different experiences of pharmacy and pharmacy education. It was most interesting discussing the differences between our intern programmes as they have multiple to pick from where we only have the one. I like that we only have one programme in New Zealand, as there could be discrepancies between what interns learn in the different programmes, which would produce pharmacists with different levels of knowledge. The Gala Ball was another great event at the end of congress which gave us another opportunity to mingle and network with all the Australian pharmacy student delegates but also with many of the speakers from the education seminars as they also attended this event. It was held at Perth's spectacular Crown Casino with incredible views and delicious food.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our time in Perth and would highly recommend to future students to attend NAPSA congress and see 'how the other side lives'. It was a fantastic learning opportunity for all of us, filling our brains with knowledge and ideas that we can hopefully bring back to New Zealand pharmacies, as well as some not so great ideas that we can hopefully prevent the New Zealand pharmacy industry from stepping towards. We thank our sponsors ProPharma, Green Cross Health, OUSA, and NZAPS-O for your contribution and support to get us there and are very grateful. We wouldn't have been able to have this wonderful experience without you.